Moving from Assessment to Outcome-Based Collaborative Action

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In 1995, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) Region 3 recognized that it needed to change how data and science were used in regional decision-making and entered into a partnership with the ORD to implement the comprehensive MAIA Program. This partnership was to transfer research, monitoring, and assessment results to managers in the Mid-Atlantic region. The pre-MAIA approach used state and program data to describe environmental conditions and stressors, with the lead of the state and U.S. EPA on solutions and evaluations of their effectiveness. The post-MAIA partnership integrated economic and social factors with environmental assessment; included NGOs and local communities in identifying problems and values and selecting solutions; and, most importantly, used high-quality science from the ORD through EMAP, ReVA, RePlus, and human ecology research.

Because of the ORD, the Mid-Atlantic region is one of the best characterized areas in the world, a dramatic accomplishment. In addition, the ORD and Region 3 collaboration through MAIA has produced high-quality science that has been integrated into the region (including the states and counties), improving environmental decisions within the region and thus resulting in measurable environmental and socioeconomic outcomes.

What process was used that allowed ORD science to reach solutions and measurable outcomes? The MAIA team jointly and simultaneously worked with ORD scientists, academia, and state, regional and local program managers to plan, develop, and implement a "science-for-outcomes-program." We used research questions as the integrator: always making science clear and understandable for managers; making research relevant to the managers' needs; and ultimately building ongoing interactive teams of managers and scientists. These collaborative networks progress through a continuum: science → assessment → action → environmental outcomes. Case examples will be provided in the poster.

Collaboration is key: science plus the collaborative process increase the probability of reaching environmental outcomes. As a result of the collaboration, federal, state, and local governments in the Mid-Atlantic region are making decisions based on high-quality science and information and achieving environmental and socioeconomic outcomes. The science, process, and outcomes are documented in our case examples.

Region 3 is committed to be a region where managers at all scales allocate resources based on high-quality science and environmental and socioeconomic outcomes. The upshot is an innovative, effective approach to optimize environmental, economic, and social components into a sustainable framework for the Mid-Atlantic Region. The ORD and Region 3's MAIA model is a national template.